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> The aim of criticism is to distinguish what is essential in the work of a writer. It is the delight of the critic to praise; but praise is scarcely part of his duty. . . . What we ask of him is that he should find out more for us than we can find out for ourselves.
>
> Arthur Symons
> ---Introduction to Coleridge's
> Biographia Literaria

This issue is mainly devoted to the reproduction of a portion of an important and interesting paper read by Anna Balakian, Assistant Professor of Romance Languages at Syracuse University, at the Comparative Literature Section of the MLA meeting last December. In this paper Professor Balakian has indicated specific items of indebtedness of the French Surrealists, and particularly of their literary leader, André Breton, to psychoanalytic doctrine, particularly to the doctrines of Freud. Scholarly papers such as these fill an important gap in the study of the interrelationship between literary criticism and present-day theories in depth psychology. It is one thing to note, as do many modern critics, that "the surrealists are indebted to the psychoanalysts for their basic aesthetic concepts," or that "the works of Kafka can be understood only through the use of psychoanalytic guides and signposts." It is quite another matter to ascertain the precise nature of such indebtednesses and guides and, if possible, to determine to what extent the influences are the products of conscious and deliberate acceptance of scientific theory and to what extent they are determined by the unconscious or marginally conscious predilections of the authors under consideration.

One word of warning, however, should be given. While it is undoubtedly true that almost all of the newer concepts in dynamic psychology stem from Freud, the literary critic should be wary of attributing too much to "the gospel according to St. Sigmund." Concepts like that of the subconscious (as opposed to the unconscious) and its influence on phenmona like automatic writing arise from the investigations of Janet, and the concept of the dream as an integrating and unifying factor in life and art, while hinted at by Freud, is to be found in its fullest development in Jung.

Freud and the Surrealist Mind

Surrealism is an intellectual kaleidoscope consisting of a mode of verbal and pictorial representation, a philosophical point of view, and a social attitude. On all its facets it has amply and generously acknowledged antecedents and influences. Moreover, since the surrealists have been on the whole a prodigiously erudite group of men of letters, with a broad and international outlook, their references are very explicit and direct; the problem, then, is not to discover the sources of their inspiration but to evaluate the effect, intensity, and in some cases deformation of these intellectual imprints.

In all three aspects of surrealism, there are clear indications of the surrealists' readings of Germanic works. In the matter of representation they felt themselves spiritually linked to Hölderlin, Jean-Paul, Novalis, and to Achim von Arnim, particularly in the case of André Breton.[1] As a close analysis will reveal, these German authors provided a point of departure, created a certain empathy, but in actual aim and method their connection with the surrealists is rather remote. In the field of artistic technique the line of predecessors points much more directly to the French poets of the second half of the nineteenth century.

However, surrealism is not only a special technique of verbal and pictorial expression but a concept of what mind and reality can signify to the twentieth century scientifically conditioned artist who must find a means of quelling but not quenching his spiritual thirst.[2] It was in re-examining the age-old concepts of reality and in attempting to break down the millenary acceptance of the antithesis between matter and mind that the surrealists found support in a number of 19th century German philosophers, particularly in Hegel, and in the more recent investigations of Freud into the inner chambers of the mind. The initial emphasis on psychic automatism and enthusiasm for dream revelations in surrealist writings point to Freud as the earlier of the two Germanic influences.

It was while he was a student of psychiatry, before the First World War, that André Breton, the future leader of the surrealist movement, first came in contact with Freud's studies. In 1916 while an intern at the neurological center at Nantes, he had the occasion to practice psychiatry and psychotherapy on the war wounded. In 1919, while still preoccupied with Freud, he was beginning to turn his interests from medicine to literature; psychoanalysis proved a convenient bridge for him between the scientific attitude of objective investigation and a literary mind's philosophical introspection. Freud granted the young poet-medico an interview in Vienna in 1921 in answer to a letter from Breton,[3] which he called "the most touching that I have ever received."

1. See preface to 1933 edition of Contes bizarres (translation by Théophile Gautier, fils), Cahiers Libres, Paris.
2. André Breton, Les Vases communicants, (Paris, 1932), p. 163.
3. André Breton, "Interview du Professeur Freud," Les Pas Perdus (Paris, 1924), p. 118.

Breton found the greatest psychiatrist of our time, as he considered Freud, very reticent, except for his obvious dislike of France, which had remained the only country indifferent to his work. Indeed Freud was translated into French much later than into English; Der Witz und seine Beziehung zum Unbewussten, published in 1905, did not appear in French until 1930, as one surrealist writer deploringly points out.[4] In sharp contrast with this general lack of interest on the part of the French, Breton and his confrères gave plenty of publicity to Freud and to his discoveries, in their two major periodicals, La Révolution Surréaliste and Le Surréalisme au Service de la Révolution (1924-1933). In his very first manifesto, dated 1924, Breton gave Freud ample credit for his discoveries in dream interpretation, his method of investigation and the new rights he thereby granted to the human imagination. Breton's knowledge of the history of psychology made it possible for him to judge the originality of Freud's work and to name in most scholarly manner all his predecessors; he was indiscreet enough to suggest a correction to Freud's bibliography of The Interpretation of Dreams, much to the embarrassment of the author. He foresaw as the ultimate achievement of dream study the marriage of the two states, in appearance so contradictory, of dream and reality, into one sort of reality which he called surreality.

The simplest and most obvious influence of Freudism can be found in the accounts of dreams written by practically every one of the fifty or so bona fide surrealists, who contributed to the surrealist periodicals. Both writers and artists, more in the spirit of experimentation and investigation than of pure creative expression, participated in the activity of relating or writing dreams, and, with as much candor and even less inhibition than Freud, interpreted their dreams. Robert Desnos was the most remarkable of these dreamers, could fall into a state of dreaming at the least provocation and as a result produced a rich flow of verbal images for the admiring colleagues present. In Les Vases Communicants, dedicated to Freud, André Breton envisaged existence as a composite of two urns, the dream and the state of wakefulness, constantly connected with each other and contributing to each other's intensity.[5] He noted the effect of the dream on imagery and found the same type of displacement of objects and things, and verbal condensations in the poet's dream thought as Freud had observed in his clinical cases as well as in his own dreams. In this work Breton gave Freud credit for having been the first to pronounce himself on the question: "What happens to time, space and the principle of causality in dreams?" Sending him a copy of the book, he paid tribute to Freud's "keen and marvelous sensitivity," and stated that the purpose of his book was to show on what roads of psychological conquest Freud had directed the surrealists. Verbal expression linking the visions of the dream state with conscious perceptions is also the core of Paul

4. Jean Frais-Wittman, "Le Mot d'Esprit et ses rapports avec l'inconscient," Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution, Vol. II, p. 28.
5. Breton, Les Vases Communicants, p. 16.

Eluard's works, Les Dessous d'une vie ou la Pyramide Humaine, wherein the poet envisions human experiences in the form of a pyramid, the narrow peak of which is the limited range of the lucid state, and the broad base the receptivity of the full, solid subconscious.

Another aspect of Freudian influence was the practice of automatic writing, which was considered a safer road toward the subconscious mind than the interpretation of dreams. This process became for the surrelaists a form of self administered psychoanalysis: placing themselves in a state of stupifying attentiveness they tried to shut out all outside disturbances and to give free play to the inner powers of association of words and the images which they suggested. Most of what they called "Textes surréalistes" is fundamentally automatic writing. Those of Paul Eluard and Tristan Tzara are particularly fecund in uncanny imagery. In his Genèse et Perspective artistique du surréalisme, Breton stressed automatic thinking as the common basis of surrealist poetry and art, and declared it the sole mode of expression fully satisfactory to the eye and ear. He categorically claimed that a work cannot be called surrelaist unless it embraced the entire psychophysical field.

A third form of Freudian experimentation was the intentional simulation of state of mental abnormality. L'Immaculée Conception was a collaboration between Breton and Eluard which set out: "to prove that the mind, poetically conditioned, is in a normal man capable of reproducing in their broad lines the most paradoxical and eccentric verbal manifestations. , .without risk of lasting trouble, and without compromising its facylty of equilibrium."[6] In this work the writers set themselves a triple aim: to imitate delirium, artificially assume the various forms of insanity, and thus establish a method of investigating the widest range of mental activity.

These exercises in uninhibited, and sometimes erotic, writing and exploration of sensations beyond the control of reason were to sharpen, to renovate poetic imagery, and to incorporate into the poet's technique Freud's observations on the role of language in dream and dream interpretation: the condensation that results in a desnity of imagery; displacement of the senses of time and space in the vision; the importance of figurative language: Freud had noted, and the surrealists have actually illustrated in their poems, that concrete terms, owing to the evolution of their connotation and to their subsequent mutation of role, produce more frequent and more rapid mental associations than do conceptual ones: consider the many disturbing uses to which elementary words like "table," "homme," "sable," have been put in surrelaist imagery; or provocative ones like "épave," "miroir," "sein," "pyramide," "reverbère," etc., which are often the kernel of the surrealist image and play central roles similar to the clocks, stairs, platters and umbrellas of surrealist paintings. Ambiguity and incorrect meaning attributed to words, which Freud explains as the simultaneous expression of more than one dream-thought, due to a psychic disturbance in the subject, are ever dominant in surrealist writing: however,

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6. Breton & Eluard, L'Immaculée Conception, (Paris, 1930), p. 28

they are considered not as indications of frustrations but as a test of the richness and versatility of the poet's imagination. Finally the strong element of absurdity common in dreams, and a certain type of unsought humor revealed in the hallucinations of the deranged mind were intentionally practiced in surrealist writing to demonstrate a supersense of reality.

The surrealists' tributes to Freud continued to the end of the psychologist's life. When Freud was rumored to be imprisoned by the Nazis in 1938, Breton wrote an indignant letter in a London pediodical, in which he declared that Freud had been "a life of inspiration which we hold as dear to us as our own," that in his attempts to seek "emnacipation in the widest sense" he had been the reincarnation of Goethe; he designated Freud as "he from whom so many of us derive our finest reason for existence and action."[7] Here are strong words of praise; but despite their adherence to Freud, the surrealists did not find him as responsive to their work as they had been to his. Upon receiving Breton's Les Vases Communicants he had to confess in his letter to the author that it was not at all clear to him what surrealism was. "perhaps I am not made to understand it, he said, for I am so far removed from art."[8] The reason he could not understand was that the surrealists were on a much more ambitious venture than he. In spite of their admiration of Freud, the poets observed shortcomings not in the psychologist's method but in its application and conclusions. They felt that Freud had been too reticent in his interpretation of dreams; they deplored the fact that he denied the existence of the prophetic dream. The dream as a clinical interpretation of the disintegration of personality,--with which Freud had been exclusively concerned,--was one thing, but as a form of literature and art it could not be justified unless it also revealed the unification of the personality of the artist: his adjustment to the two planes of reality, no longer visualized as contradictory. This had been suggested by Freud, but unintentionally: he had, says Breton, "sans le connaître retrouvé . . .dans le rêve le principe de conciliation des contraires."[9] The greatest weakness seen in Freud was precisely the fact that he drew too definite a barrier between the exterior world and the dream experience. It was not sufficient to show the effect of conscious experience on the dream; the surrealists wanted to go one step further and show the effect of the dream state on consciousness. Breton justifies the poet's stepping ahead of the psychologist master by a quotation from Freud himself:

> Poets are in the knowledge of the soul our masters, for they drink at sources not yet made accessible to science. Why has the poet not expressed himself more precisely on the nature of dreams?[10]

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7. Breton, "Freud at Vienna," London Bulletin, London, 1938, no. 2 p. 2.
8. Breton-Freud Correspondance, Le Surréalisme au Service de la Révolution, Vol. V, p. 11.
9. Breton, "Reserves quant à la signification historique des investigations sur le reve," Le Surréalisme au Service de la Révolution, Vol. IV, p. 9.
10. Breton, Les Vases communicants, footnote, p. 163.

The interpretation of dreams, psychoanalysis, the study of the irrationalities of the insane, utilized as methods of explaining the quirks and frustrations of neurotics, were inconsequential to the surrealists. Breton derides the fact that psychologists would interpret the surrealist Yves Tanguy's paintings on the basis of childhood sin obsessions. As he states in his Secpnd Manifesto: it is not aurprising to observe that as surrealism progresses, it applies its attention to something other than the solution of a psychological problem no matter how interesting it may be."
A point was reached in the thinking of the surrealists where Freud could not accompany them. It was "désolant," as Breton pointed out in his "Reserves quant à la signification historique des investigations sur le rêve," that the monotheist Freud had said: "psychic reality is a particular form of existence which must not be confused with material reality." On the contrary, Freud'd methods had pointed out the way to that substratum of consciousness wherein the distinction between sensory and intellectual functioning of the mind is erased, and thereby the disparity between the sensory evidence of the outer world and the psychic reality experienced by the mind yields in favor of their inherent unity. Consequently, the greater freedom of mental activity whivh Freud's methods made possible was not to be enjoyed as a means of escape from exterior reality but for better knowledge, and transformation of the world of matter. What the surrealists were basically doing was to revise their notion of reality.

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Starting in a weay post-war era, and temporarily infected by nihilism of the times, surrealism outgrew the negative attitude and became a credo of hope, based on faith in the potential capacity of the human mind for synthesis and solidarity: synthesis of the human dream and material reality: solidarity in the intellectual development of contemporary civilization.

Considered in this light surrealism is a clear-cut twentieth century integration of art, science and philosophy. With the international character of its personnel and in view of its broad field of radiation, it may prove as universal in scope as romanticism was in the preceding century. Believing their efforts to run parallel to those of the modern scientists, the surrealists have bean trying to give proof that the arts are not behind the sciences in man's unrelenting progression toward knowledge.

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Our contributor for this issue is our subscriber-member, Mr. Louis Fraiberg of Detroit. Mr. Fraiberg writes that "this list is a selection from my card file, which is still growing. . ." Many of these items have been mentioned in previous installments of the bibliography, but the whole list is reproduced here because of the interesting chronological overtones of the items selected.

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And, just as this was being stencilled, we received a card from Mr. Fraiberg, listing the latest addition in the field:

Ernst Kris, Psychoanalysis and the Arts, International Universities Press, 1952.

Addition to the Subscription List

Charles Angoff, 570 Lexington Avenue, New York City